

From: Dave Owen (Los Angeles)
To: 'microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
Date: 12/10/01 6:45pm
Subject: Please do not allow Microsoft to extend its' monopoly into school s as a 'punishment'

Simply put -- if cigarette companies were 'punished' by providing cigarettes to schools free of charge, this would provide a short-term financial drain on the company, but a long-term financial gain to the company.

Similarly -- if Microsoft is 'punished' by providing Microsoft software to schools free of charge, this would provide a short-term financial drain on the company, but a SHORT-term and long-term financial gain to the company for the following reasons:

- If children are taught using Microsoft programs, they will be significantly more likely to use these programs as adults -- long-term gain.
- If children are taught using Microsoft programs, their parents will be significantly more likely to purchase these programs for doing schoolwork at home -- short-term gain.
- If schools utilize Microsoft programs, they will need to hire Microsoft-trained individuals as support staff-- short-term gain.
- If schools utilize Microsoft programs, eventually the free settlement software will be out of date and they will need to purchase updated Microsoft software -- long-term gain.
- If schools utilize Microsoft programs, eventually the free settlement software will be out of date and they will need to make significant infrastructure revisions to utilize any alternative to the outdated Microsoft programs -- long-term gain.

As a 30-year-old working professional who was exposed to computers at a young age, ALL of which has been obsoleted by current technologies, I humbly submit the following:

The technology our children learn will be obsoleted very quickly, likely before they leave college. We serve them better by teaching technology theory, rather than sitting them in front of a computer just like their home computer and saying "you know what to do".

The best way to teach technology theory is to use tools that are extremely fundamental; for instance, you do not teach math by teaching a student how to use a calculator. The calculator is a useful tool, but working math problems out by hand is an extremely fundamental tool. At the same time, there are circumstances (such as figuring SINE and COSINE) where a calculator is a boon. This is why calculators and hand calculation are both taught and supported in schools.

For computers, the most fundamental tools available can be found on computers that support 'command line' access, such as DOS, UNIX, Linux, and BeOS (among others). At the same time, computers are also used for word

processing, to run training programs, and to teach skills such as typing. Other, less fundamental tools are better suited for such use. This is why computers of all kinds must be taught and supported in schools -- by teaching our children to use the right tool for the job, giving them a firm grounding in fundamentals, and exposing them to different (and ever-changing) technologies, we will give them a most fundamental tool: the skill to examine, choose, and adapt.

Extending the Microsoft monopoly further into our schools will not help us accomplish this task -- instead, it will teach our children that there is only 'one' kind of computer, and it is the only kind of computer they should bother to learn. Such complacency is abhorrent in an educated and industrialized society.

A far better lesson to our children, as well as to Microsoft, would be a settlement that increases the range of computer equipment available, increases the computer/student and computer/classroom ratio, and provides monies to hire trained support staff.

Thank you for your time.